

Impact of Freedom Movement on North Salmara Sub Division under Bongaigaon District of Assam

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Date of Submission: 04-11-2019

Date of Acceptance: 20-11-2019

I. INTRODUCTION

The British colonial rule made people dissatisfied at every sphere of their life style. The colonial rulers had abandoned the Ahom Aristocracy and introduced a modern society based on bureaucratic system. They changed the kingdomhood towards democracy British rulers encouraged much migration policy. This led to the influx to this state in a large number. Bengali babus, Muslims and tea labourers came to Assam as well as North Salmara Sub-Division.¹ This posed a serious threat to the indigenous people of this area and for the whole State. Politically, people were dominated Divide and rule policy was adopted for governance. Some local greedy people joined the British administration and helped them by giving internal information of freedom Fighters activities in various interior places of this locality.

Through Britishers administrators spoke and advocated for democracy, but they did not handover political powers to the local people. Democratic movements, demands etc ere suppressed red handedly. People had no any say on misrule of the British. If somebody raised their voice for genuine demands, they were punished. Penalty and fine had to pay for minor causes.

All these adverse activities of the British colonial rulers made people discontent and agitated for emancipation. Many conscious new modern educated youths of North Salmara Sub-division Under Bongaigaondistrict of Assam took imitative for awakening people of this area and they secured popular support in almost all steps of freedom struggle. Politics were changing from centralization attitude to the decentralizing principles.

Slowly but surely, people were getting political representation in British Assam, British India government. The huge numbers of people were getting political education not from the Britishers but from these local political activities that were fighting for self rule, who were struggling for emancipation from slavism. Due to the continous efforts made by freedom fighters in the North Salmara Sub-Division, all section of people which includes peasantry class, students, general people, educated people (mostly youths) etc. participated in the freedom struggle. Interestingly, people could learn politics and its efforts cum influences on society.

Interestingly, people of this Sub-Division area could take the advantage of local self government. It was like primary schooling of politics. Local board, civic body etc. were familiar to the people.

Our study show that about 30% of peasants class 90% of educated youths 95% of students of all ages and 10% general people were participated in the freedom struggle in the North Salmara Sub-Division.

The following table show the percentage of Freedom fighters² classwise :

Table No. 4.1

Category of people	Total population	No. of people participated in Freedom Struggle as per records.	Percentage
Peasant	46047	13814	30%
Educated youths	11633	1104	95%
Students	3240	2916	90%
Others	7974	1515	19%
Total	58424	193349	

Source : Gazzatt of Goaplara (Approximate)

Note : The above number may be more or less, as because proper number can not be traced due to lack of data.

²Gazzatt of Goaplara

Soon after colonialisation of Assam there was trend depopulation because of severe Burmese attack and certain disease. However, when the colonial rulers started the extension of the territorial boundaries of Assam, a trend of repopulation on mergers besides the economic policy and administrative change of the Britishers opened the floodgates of migration which immensely contributed towards the trend of repopulation. The class structure and social groups of North Salmara Sub-Division area can be illustrated as under.

In above chart, the classes are broadly divided into outsiders' class and Assamese class. The outsiders' class include all the emerging classes which have their origin outside the State and who have migrated after the colonization of Assam. These classes of people did not participate in the freedom struggle and their attitude towards the same was completely negative. Again, the British and the employees of outside class people always tried to suppress freedom struggle and movement.

The Assamese class structure comprises the emerging Assamese classes. This distinction is however made post understands the class structure comprehensively. These class of people include Zamindars, Tea Garden owner, Brahmins, Kalita (High Class), Indigenous Muslim, Nath-Yogi, Koch-Ranbongshi (General class belong to middle class), fishermen, carpenter, sutradhar, muncho (Shoe polisher) and others belongs to lower class of people.

In the Freedom Struggle of India where North Salmara Sub-Division had played a little role, almost all section of people irrespective of caste, community, religion, etc. took part. This movement drastically changed the social life of them. The society was transforming from traditional society to the modern pace of society. People were becoming aware about their fate and adverse consequences of some superstitions like child marriage, prevention of widow, remarriage etc. They were giving up these social traditional and bad rituals in the due course of time.

Thus, the study under the head of Role of Freedom Fighters in India's Struggle for Freedom in the North Salmara Sub-Division under Bongaigaon District of Assam. An analytical study reveals the consequences and effects of Freedom Struggle in Social sphere of this area. Economy of Assam had undergone a radical change during the colonial regime. Transformation of mode of exchange from barter economy to monetized economy, discovery of local resources and establishment of industries for their systematic exploitation, introduction of new mode of communication like railways etc. were some significant economic changes that took place in colonial Assam. As Gait has observed,

"During the century for which Assam has been under British Rule and enjoyed the blessing of a settled government, its material prosperity has grown and its exports of mustard seeds potatoes, silk and other local produce have increased greatly, both in quantity and value... coal has been discovered and worked in various parts, especially in the neighbourhood of Makum in the Lakhimpur District and material oil has been found at Digboi in the same district where well have been sunk for its extraction"³.

The colonial regime has advanced the monetary system and due to their efforts Tea Estate, industry, commercial centre were setup. But all these things were introduced not for their own interest. The introduction of oil refinery at Bongaigaon, setup of paper mill at Jogighopa were done to preserve the Britishers own interest. The following tables clearly show the production of Tea in colonial Assam.

Table No. 4.2 : Production of Tea in Colonial Assam⁴.

Year	Total Tea Estate	Total Tea Garden land areas	Tea Production (Pounds)
1850	1	1875	216000
1853	10	2425	366700
1859	48	7599	12056859
1869	260	25174	4714769
1871	295	31303	6251143

With the introduction of new economic policy, the British colonial rulers wanted to collect more revenues from the peasantly class people in the form of land revenue. Lands were divided into various categories and accordingly high rate of taxes were levied. This led to the dissatisfaction among rural masses. Businessmen also had to pay high taxes. Even fishermen (who earned the little) did not spare. They had to pay Jalkar. So, they too became dissatisfied on British.

Taking advantage of this situation the educated youths and middle class people started various movements in the North Salmara Sub-Division during 1915-1942 periods.

⁴ Saikia Dandeswar, Chah Bagichar Sranik Aru Aain (1978:8)

In the pre colonial Assam, the education system was not available for general people. Only the noble section of people took the advantage of art and literature through domestic teachers. But there were some Sanskrit tools, Gurukuls and Satras which imparted education to some interested people.

But when the colonial regime was started, modern schooling facilities are introduced. Arts and Literature was given high place in the British administration. Educated people were appointed in various places of administration and they too used to be “Babu.”¹⁵. They formed the middle class family in the society.

But within a few decades of British colonial rule in Assam vis-à-vis Bongaigaon district, this middle class people could understand about the exploitation and suppression of British. So, most of the educated man participated in the freedom Struggle and some of them resigned from the British government.

While some educated youths and men directly joined the struggle, other selected art and literature for the same. These types of people composed Swadeshpremi (Mysterious) songs, music, plays, drama and drew some pictures and drawing. All these works grew and developed the sense of people towards their fate and rights. Pictures were so attractive that they caught the attention of people.

In the fact and information searching works, we could collect some names of freedom fighters who tried to fight the British by awaking and awaring people through these methods. The following table is given with address.

Table No. 4.3

Name of freedom fighters who encouraged people through Songs, Music, and Arts	Address
Harendra Kalita	Chalantapara
Ramani Kanta Das	Pachania
Biren Das	Baripukhuri
Lakshi Kanta Nath	Mojairnmukh
Bidyadhar Choudhuri	Deohati
Sarbananda Das	Deohati
Panchanan Barua	Deohati
Nareswar Ray	Deohati
Bhuban Mohan Baruah	Deohati
Rajeswar Ray	Deohati
Pabin Ray	Deohati
Kahrgeswar Ray	Deohati
Lalmohan Ray	Deohati
Jadab Ch. Adhikary	Talguri
Janardhan Das	Talguri
Kalicharan Nath	Maligaon
Puren Nath	Maligaon
Md. Ali Sarkar	Balarchar
Shashi Bhushan Fouzdar	Kakoijana

The above people formed various singer groups (rural and floating) and performed programmes by their own cost. The ultimate aim of these volunteers was to throw away the British rule and to establish self rule and self respect.

II. CONCLUSION

Thus it comes to the conclusion that the freedom fighters finally decided to expel the Britisher from the soil of India as well as from the North Salmara Sub-Division under Bongaigaon District of Assam. Freedom Struggle in the North Salmara Sub-Division had some other effects. The freedom fighters and the leaders of the Congress enjoyed very simple livelihood and life style. Almost all leaders used to wear “Khaddar Kapor” Dhori-Kurta were common dress for public funds. People like Dharmeswar Das of Pachania were like private trust for many poor people. Govinda Dev Sarma of Salmara also had good reputation on financial affairs. People were taught by these new educated youths about simple living high thinking Philosophicalism” was one of the methods of these leaders. Their speeches were like firebrand. They talked the truth, adopted non-violence method, bore the pain of punishment by British. But still they remained calm and firm on their aim and objectives. All these nature, behaviour, activities and determination make the mass general people astonished. They too wanted to be same or at least make their future generation like these leaders.

The respect for these leaders by mass people strengthened our national movement in North Salmara Sub-Division under Bongaigaon District area.

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IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

Nurul Islam Chakdar. " Nurul Islam Chakdar." IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 24 no. 11, 2019, pp. 16-19.